

IN THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1-7. (Canceled)

8. (Currently amended) In an information distribution system including provider equipment and subscriber equipment, said provider equipment communicating to said subscriber equipment information streams including content requested by said subscriber equipment, an apparatus comprising:

a session manager, for interacting with said subscriber equipment and maintaining a play queue comprising a plurality of playlists, wherein each playlist is associated with a respective subscriber, said playlist defining at least one content stream to be provided to said subscriber equipment, said playlist further identifying reverse and fast-forward streams associated with said at least one content stream, each content stream comprising a plurality of splicing entry and exit points dispersed therein to enable transitioning between content streams;

a server, for storing content streams; and

a server controller for retrieving from said server, content streams defined by said playlist queue, said content streams being sequentially provided to said subscriber equipment; and

said session manager modifying said playlist in response to playlist modification commands received from said subscriber equipment, wherein a next stream in said playlist is spliced at an entry point associated with an exit point of a current stream being sent to said subscriber equipment;

~~said server controller continuously accessing said playlist, and~~

~~said subscriber equipment utilizing subscriber-side latency masking techniques.~~

9. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 8, wherein:

said modification commands comprise at least one of an add command, a delete command, a skip forward command, a skip backwards command, a fast forward command and a rewind command.

10. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 9, wherein:
said session manager, in response to said add command and said delete command, respectively adding or deleting a subscriber-indicated content stream from said playlist.

11. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 9, wherein:
said session manager, in response to said skip forward command and said skip backwards command, causing said server controller to begin providing to said subscriber equipment, respectively, a next content stream or a previous content stream within said playlist.

12. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 9, wherein:
said session manager, in response to said fast forward command and said rewind command, causing said server controller to begin providing to said subscriber equipment, respectively, said fast forward stream or said fast rewind stream associated with a presently provided content stream

13. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 8, wherein:
said server controller, in response to a remaining portion of a provided content stream being below a threshold level, communicating a termination notification to said session manager.

14. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 13, wherein:
said session manager, in response to said termination notification, communicating to said server controller a next content stream to be provided to said subscriber equipment.

15. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 8, wherein said server comprises a plurality of servers, each of said plurality of servers storing at least a respective portion of the content streams available to a subscriber, said server controller causing a transport processor to receive a substantially continuous stream of content for each active subscriber regardless of the server presently storing that content.

16. (Currently amended) In an information distribution system including provider equipment and subscriber equipment, said provider equipment communicating content to said subscriber equipment via a distribution network, a provider method comprising the steps of:

establishing a session with a subscriber, ~~wherein the subscriber utilizes subscriber-side latency masking techniques;~~

maintaining a play queue at said provider equipment comprising a plurality of playlists, wherein each playlist is associated with a respective subscriber;

generating a playlist, ~~at said provider equipment,~~ for said subscriber if a playlist does not presently exist, said playlist determining a sequence of content streams to be retrieved from a server and coupled to a transport processor for distribution to said subscriber via said distribution network, each content stream comprising a plurality of splicing entry and exit points dispersed therein to enable transitioning between content streams, said playlist further identifying reverse and fast-forward streams associated with said content streams;

~~continuously accessing said playlist;~~

in the case of said subscriber transmitting a playlist modification command, modifying said playlist at said provider equipment in response to said playlist modification command;

in the case of said subscriber transmitting a content stream modification command, modifying said content stream in response to said content stream modification command;

determining a next content stream to be provided to said subscriber from said playlist;

closing a present content stream being retrieved from a sever and provided to said transport processor; and

communicating said next content stream to be provided to said server to a server controller, said server controller responsively causing said next content stream to be provided to said transport processor upon the termination of the present content stream provided to said transport processor, wherein a next stream in said playlist is spliced at an entry point associated with an exit point of a current stream being sent to said subscriber equipment.

17. (Previously presented) The method of claim 16, wherein:

said modification commands comprise at least one of an add command, a delete command, a skip forward command, a skip backwards command, a fast forward command and a rewind command.

18. (Previously presented) The method of claim 17, further comprising the step of:

adding or deleting a subscriber-indicated content stream from said playlist in response to, respectively, said add command and said delete command.

19. (Previously presented) The method of claim 18, further comprising the step of:

in response to said fast forward command and said rewind command, causing said server controller to begin providing to said subscriber equipment, respectively, said fast forward stream or said fast rewind stream associated with a presently provided content stream

20. (Previously presented) The method of claim 16, wherein:

in response to a remaining portion of a provided content stream being below a threshold level, communicating a termination notification to said session manager.

21. (Previously presented) The method of claim 20, wherein:
said session manager, in response to said termination notification, communicating to said server controller a next content stream to be provided to said subscriber equipment.